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Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

Summary record of the 2nd meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 3 October 2011, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Ms. Miculescu ..... (Romania)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 56: Information from Non-Self-Governing Territories transmitted under Article 73 *e* of the Charter of the United Nations (A/66/23 (chaps. VII and XII) and A/66/65 and Add.1)

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Agenda item 60: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (*Territories not covered under other items*) (A/66/23 (chaps. VIII, IX, X, XI and XII) and A/66/260)

1. **Mr. Ja'afari** (Syrian Arab Republic), speaking as Rapporteur of the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, introduced the report of the Special Committee (A/66/23). It reviewed various aspects of the Special Committee's activities during 2011 and its plans for future work; gave an account of the 2011 Caribbean regional seminar, held in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines; focused on specific themes and on individual situations in Territories in chapters II to XI; and concluded in chapter XII with its recommendations to the General Assembly regarding the Territories in a series of draft resolutions.

2. He drew the Committee's attention to a number of proposed revisions to draft resolution VI, entitled "Questions of American Samoa, Anguilla, Bermuda, the British Virgin Islands, the Cayman Islands, Guam, Montserrat, Pitcairn, Saint Helena, the Turks and Caicos Islands and the United States Virgin Islands", to reflect recent developments in those Territories. In part B, section I, on American Samoa, it was proposed that a new paragraph 6 should be added, to read: "*Welcomes* the invitation to American Samoa in 2011 to become Pacific Islands Forum Observer". In part B, section VI, on Guam, it was proposed that a new paragraph 5 should be added, to read: "*Welcomes* the invitation to Guam in 2011 to become Pacific Islands Forum Observer". In part B, section VII, on Montserrat, it was proposed that the word "later" in the fourth preambular paragraph and the phrase ", which is expected to enter into force later in 2011" in paragraph 1 should be deleted. Lastly, in part B, section X, on the Turks and Caicos Islands, the phrase "followed by the introduction of a new constitution to the Territory" should be added at the end of the fifth preambular paragraph, and paragraph 1 should be amended to read: "*Notes with grave concern* the ongoing situation in the Turks and Caicos Islands, and also notes the efforts of the administering Power to restore good governance, including through the introduction of a new 2011 constitution, and sound financial management in the Territory".

3. **Mr. Núñez Mosquera** (Cuba), speaking as Acting Chair of the Special Committee on decolonization, said that there were still many Non-Self-Governing Territories, and progress on each of them was urgently needed. In the context of the Third International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, the Committee should go beyond affirmation of its commitment to decolonization and take constructive action grounded in meaningful dialogue. The plan of action for the Decade gave clear roles to the various actors involved. Only Timor-Leste had been decolonized since the First International Decade had been proclaimed. During the Second Decade, two referendums on self-determination had been held in Tokelau; the close cooperation between the Committee and the Government of New Zealand in that regard set a good example for others to follow. Effective interaction and dialogue with administering Powers was indispensable for constructive resolution of the remaining decolonization issues and the full implementation of the Declaration.

4. The Special Committee had considered the question of sending visiting missions to Non-Self-Governing Territories, and a number of constructive proposals had been made in that regard, including at the Caribbean regional seminar. The seminar had recommended, inter alia, that interactions between the Special Committee and the administering Powers should continue to be nurtured through various means and that relations among the Non-Self-Governing Territories should be enhanced, including through the proposed creation of a network among them, along the

lines of South-South dialogue. The 2011 meeting of the Inter-Virgin Islands Council between the British Virgin Islands and the United States Virgin Islands, held for the first time at the level of heads of territorial Government, could serve as an example to others. The Special Committee would continue to seek the cooperation of administering Powers in facilitating United Nations visiting and special missions. It would also continue to explore the possibility of combining such missions with regional seminars in order to optimize the available resources.

5. It was vital to provide assistance to the Non-Self-Governing Territories, which suffered the impact of negative socio-economic and environmental factors. Climate change, for instance, required significant international cooperation, and the role of regional and subregional organizations in that regard could not be overemphasized. In that context, it was commendable that American Samoa and Guam had recently obtained observer status at the Pacific Islands Forum.

6. Joint and well-coordinated efforts were essential to promote the cause of decolonization; the Special Committee would continue to take the lead in facilitating the required cooperation so as to carry the process of decolonization forward during the Third International Decade. In that context, he commended the role of the Department of Public Information and the Decolonization Unit of the Department of Political Affairs in updating and expanding the latter's website on decolonization.

7. The work ahead during the Third International Decade highlighted the urgent need to support the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories in establishing full self-government under the Charter of the United Nations The Fourth Committee must meet the expectations of those peoples by reinvigorating the recently rather lacklustre decolonization processes.

8. **Mr. Abdelaziz** (Egypt), speaking on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, for which decolonization and the exercise of the fundamental right to self-determination had always been high priorities, said that colonialism in any form, including economic exploitation, was incompatible with the principles of the United Nations. It was therefore unfortunate that efforts were still needed to do away with it.

9. He stressed the importance of the recommendations contained in the Final Document of the Fifteenth Summit Conference of Heads of State and Government of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, held in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, and in the Final Document of the Movement's Sixteenth Ministerial Conference, held in Bali, Indonesia, including the renewal of the call to States Members of the United Nations to speed up the process of decolonization and bring about the complete elimination of colonialism. The Movement believed that the declaration of the Third International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism would send the right message in that regard.

10. The Movement urged all administering Powers to pay full and fair compensation to the peoples of the Territories under their control for the economic, social and cultural consequences of their occupation. At the same time, the United Nations must ensure that economic and other activities being carried out by the administering Powers of Non-Self-Governing Territories did not run counter to the interests of their peoples but instead promoted development and helped them make progress towards self-determination, while safeguarding their cultural identity and their heritage.

11. As a strong supporter of the work of the Special Committee, the Movement urged administering Powers to cooperate with it.

12. The Movement's position on the question of Puerto Rico remained unchanged and had been outlined in the Final Document of the Sixteenth Ministerial Conference.

13. More serious efforts should be made to guarantee the right to self-determination of all peoples, including the Palestinian people, who had been deprived for decades of their inalienable right to an independent, viable and sovereign State on the basis of the two-State solution and relevant international resolutions.

14. **Mr. Errázuriz** (Chile), speaking on behalf of the Rio Group, said that, on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the Special Committee on decolonization, it was important to ensure that all peoples could exercise their inalienable right to self-determination. While the work of the United Nations had enabled many peoples to gain independence, the fact that there were still 16 Non-Self-Governing Territories on the United Nations list clearly showed that the decolonization process was not over. In the context of the Third International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, he reaffirmed the Rio Group's commitment to eradicating colonialism and called upon the administering Powers

to take the necessary measures to achieve decolonization in all the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories, taking into consideration the particular circumstances of each case. He also called upon the administering Powers to cooperate with the Committee and to transmit the information called for under Article 73 e of the Charter of the United Nations.

15. The Group supported the work of the Department of Public Information to disseminate information on the objectives of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples and urged it to redouble its efforts. The Group also welcomed the upgrading of the decolonization website.

16. The Group reiterated its strong support for the legitimate rights of Argentina in the sovereignty dispute with the United Kingdom over the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas. The two Governments must resume their negotiations in order to find a peaceful and lasting solution to the dispute, in accordance with the relevant resolutions and declarations of the General Assembly, the Organization of American States (OAS) and other forums and organizations, as soon as possible, bearing in mind the principle of territorial integrity. The Group reiterated its support for the Declaration and Special Communiqué on the issue of the Malvinas Islands and exploration for fossil fuels on the continental shelf adopted by the Heads of State and Government of Latin America and the Caribbean gathered at the Unity Summit held in Mexico on 22 and 23 February 2010. It also rejected the United Kingdom's military activities in the Malvinas Islands, which ran counter to the region's policy of consistently seeking a solution to the dispute through peaceful means, and recalled its declaration on that matter issued in Santiago, Chile, on 15 October 2010.

17. The Special Committee on decolonization had adopted numerous resolutions and decisions on the question of Puerto Rico over the past 14 years, reaffirming the inalienable right of its people to self-determination and independence and reiterating that they constituted a Latin American and Caribbean nation. He requested the General Assembly to consider all aspects of the question of Puerto Rico.

18. Measures should continue to be taken to promote sustained and balanced economic growth in the small island Territories in the Caribbean and the Pacific and to enable them to exercise their right to self-determination. Special attention should also be paid to the serious problems affecting those Territories, including the rapid loss of land caused by rising sea levels as a result of climate change, hurricanes, volcanic eruptions and other natural disasters.

19. With regard to Western Sahara, the Rio Group affirmed its support for the relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions, reaffirmed General Assembly resolution 65/112 and reiterated that, in accordance with that resolution, it continued to support the efforts of the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy for Western Sahara to reach a just, lasting and mutually acceptable political solution leading to self-determination for the people of Western Sahara in the context of agreements that were compatible with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) and other relevant resolutions.

20. In that regard, bearing in mind the four rounds of negotiations and the rounds of informal talks that had taken place, the Rio Group hoped that those initiatives would lead to more intensive and substantive negotiations in accordance with international law under the auspices of the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy. The Group welcomed the agreement of the parties expressed in the communiqué of the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General, dated 18 March 2008. It looked forward to the establishment of family visits by land and the continuation of the existing programme of visits by air, and encouraged the parties to cooperate with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in the implementation of the agreement.

21. **Ms. Silveira** (Uruguay), speaking on behalf of the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR), the State party in the process of accession, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), and the associated States Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Chile, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru, said that she wished to reiterate their support for the legitimate rights of the Argentine Republic to the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas. That support had been expressed in the Presidential Declarations issued at Potrero de los Funes, Argentina, in 1996 and Asunción, Paraguay, in 1999, which had been reaffirmed in the Joint Communiqué of the Presidents of the States parties of MERCOSUR and associated States adopted on 29 June 2011 at the forty-first Meeting of the

Council of the Common Market. The Communiqué also noted that the adoption of unilateral measures was incompatible with United Nations decisions and that it was in the interests of the whole region for the prolonged sovereignty dispute to be resolved as soon as possible, in accordance with the resolutions of the General Assembly and the declarations of OAS, MERCOSUR, the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) and other regional and multilateral forums.

22. The Communiqué further noted that the States in question undertook, within the framework of the international agreements in force, to inform the Argentine Government about any vessels or marine structures travelling to the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands with cargo to be used for illegal hydrocarbon and/or mining activities on the Argentine continental shelf and to adopt, pursuant to international law and their respective domestic legislation, all appropriate regulatory measures to prevent the entry into their ports of vessels flying the illegal flag of the Malvinas Islands. It also endorsed the request of the Heads of State and Government of UNASUR that the Secretary-General should renew his efforts, pursuant to the mission of good offices entrusted to him by the General Assembly through successive resolutions, to bring about the resumption of negotiations in order to find a peaceful solution to the dispute as soon as possible. Lastly, it reiterated that the inclusion of the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands in the list of countries and Territories covered by part four of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union was incompatible with the existence of a sovereignty dispute.

23. On the same occasion, the Presidents of the countries in question had adopted a special declaration in which they rejected the statements of the British Minister of Defence regarding the deployment of combat aircraft and naval power in the Malvinas Islands zone. With such statements, the United Kingdom continued to ignore the reiterated calls from the international community to negotiate with Argentina to resolve the sovereignty dispute, in contrast with the firm will of Argentina and the entire region to seek a peaceful solution.

24. In 1833 the United Kingdom had expelled the Argentine population from the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and had replaced those people with British inhabitants, who did not fall within the category of a subjugated population within the meaning of General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV). The Islands therefore constituted a colonial territory without a colonized population. Assembly resolutions 2065 (XX), 3160 (XXVIII), 31/49, 37/9, 38/12, 39/6, 40/21, 41/40, 42/19 and 43/25, as well as the statements issued by the Special Committee on decolonization from 1964 to 2011, had established that the question of the Malvinas Islands constituted a special and particular colonial situation involving a sovereignty dispute between the Argentine Republic and the United Kingdom, and that the only way to end the dispute was through a peaceful negotiated solution. MERCOSUR and its associated States rejected the prospecting for non-renewable natural resources being carried out by the United Kingdom on the Argentine continental shelf, in violation of General Assembly resolution 31/49, which called upon the two parties to refrain from taking decisions that would imply introducing unilateral modifications in the situation while the Islands were going through the process recommended by the General Assembly. They also rejected the conduct of military exercises by the Government of the United Kingdom, including the firing of missiles from the territory of the Malvinas Islands, which violated resolution 31/49, obstructed the full implementation of the maritime safety standards of the International Maritime Organization and ran counter to the policy of consistently seeking a peaceful settlement of the territorial dispute.

25. For almost five decades, the General Assembly's call for settlement of the colonial situation of the Malvinas Islands had remained unfulfilled. MERCOSUR and its associated States reaffirmed their desire to see the early resumption of negotiations between the Argentine Republic and the United Kingdom, in compliance with the mandate of the international community set forth in all the relevant United Nations resolutions.

26. **Mr. Ramafole** (Lesotho) said that, with the support of the international community, Lesotho had defeated colonial hegemony in 1966. His delegation therefore attached great importance to the work of the United Nations in the area of decolonization. Much had been achieved in that regard, but there were still 16 Non-Self-Governing Territories, and, during the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, only Timor-Leste had gained independence. The Third International Decade should provide an opportunity to

reflect on the obstacles encountered during the previous Decades and to build on past achievements. No effort should be spared to ensure that the numerous General Assembly and Security Council resolutions on decolonization were implemented.

27. The United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) had been established in 1991 with the aim of facilitating the Territory's transition to independence and sovereignty. Yet Western Sahara remained a colony. The informal rounds of talks held in July 2010 and June 2011 had yielded no meaningful progress on the core issues. He therefore urged the parties to commence formal negotiations without further delay.

28. The Special Committee had been instrumental in furthering the cause of decolonization, but its potential had not been fully realized. It should be allocated adequate resources from the regular budget so that it could visit as many Territories as it might wish in order to convey its message. Furthermore, the Special Committee should craft tailored solutions for all Non-Self-Governing Territories, taking into account their individual circumstances.

29. The cooperation of the administering Powers with all stakeholders was vital for the success of efforts to eradicate colonialism. His delegation therefore urged those Powers to demonstrate renewed political will to end colonialism and to show good faith in negotiations.

30. The Department of Public Information should be used to promote the goals of the Declaration and to disseminate information to local populations on the political options available. To that end, the Department must be adequately funded.

31. Colonialism, which was synonymous with exploitation and enslavement, had no place in the twenty-first century. The international community should therefore strengthen its resolve to eradicate it.

32. **Mr. Diallo** (Senegal) said that, on the fiftieth anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration on decolonization in 2010, the international community had expressed the hope that the process of eradicating colonialism would be accelerated. However, no Territories had been decolonized since Timor-Leste in 2002. Now, at the start of the Third International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, the path to self-determination was often obstructed by the administering Powers, despite their professed commitment to the principles of self-determination, independence and racial equality. The Committee must therefore ensure that the administering Powers fulfilled their obligations with regard to decolonization. His delegation supported the recommendations contained in the report of the Special Committee, aimed at bringing the 16 remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories, which represented some 2 million people, closer to the point of self-determination, in line with the Charter of the United Nations and General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV).

33. It was high time to eradicate the last vestiges of colonialism in Africa by resolving the situation in Western Sahara. His Government was dedicated to strengthening the brotherly relations among all the countries of the Maghreb and of the African continent as a whole. It was imperative to discourage all forms of separatism and prevent any breakdown of the social fabric in the Maghreb. His Government supported the Moroccan proposal to grant broad autonomy to Western Sahara within the framework of the sovereignty of the Kingdom of Morocco. That realistic, reasonable proposal offered the best prospects for a just, lasting and mutually acceptable political solution. His delegation thus supported the laudable efforts of the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy to achieve a solution to the conflict. Moreover, the Security Council, as the guarantor of international peace and security, should become more involved in dealing with the various aspects of the problem.

34. **Mr. Bamba** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that his Government enjoyed good relations with both parties to the conflict in Western Sahara and welcomed the Moroccan initiative for negotiating an autonomy statute for the Sahara region as a serious effort to achieve a realistic solution. He urged the parties to engage in direct negotiations, within the framework of talks under United Nations auspices, so as to boost confidence-building measures.

35. His Government was committed to achieving peace and security across the continent and strengthening friendly relations among all its countries and peoples. It therefore supported the efforts of the Secretary-General's Personal Envoy to move the negotiations forward. The status quo benefited no one. It was therefore crucial for the parties to make the compromises necessary to overcome their differences and lay the foundations for a constructive dialogue on substantive issues.

36. **Mr. Limeres** (Argentina) said that November 2011 would mark 50 years since the establishment of the Special Committee on decolonization; that anniversary, together with the beginning of the Third International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, should encourage the United Nations to redouble its efforts to promote decolonization, which Argentina fully supported. However, the continued existence of cases of colonialism in various forms constituted a crime that violated the Charter of the United Nations, the Declaration on decolonization and the principles of international law embodied in General Assembly resolution 2621 (XXV).

37. Resolution 1514 (XV) made it clear that there was more than one form of colonialism and set out two principles that applied to different cases: self-determination and territorial integrity. Argentina had always been a firm defender of the right of peoples to self-determination. It could therefore not countenance the distortion of the principle of self-determination to justify the continued existence of an anachronistic colonial dispute that had breached the territorial integrity of Argentina since 1833. The sovereignty dispute with the United Kingdom over the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas was of the utmost importance to Argentina. Successive General Assembly and Special Committee resolutions had recognized the colonial situation there as special and particular, to be resolved through negotiations between the two parties in the interests of the population of the Islands. The situation was characterized as such because the people of the South Atlantic Islands were not subjugated to a colonial Power but were British subjects whose circumstances had not changed during the years in which they had lived there: it was therefore a colonial situation without a colonized people. Therefore, when the United Kingdom asserted the right of self-determination for that transplanted British population, it was merely asserting self-determination for itself.

38. The United Kingdom was also unilaterally carrying out illegal exploration for and exploitation of renewable and non-renewable natural resources in the disputed archipelagos and waters, in violation of General Assembly resolution 31/49. Furthermore, it was carrying out military exercises, including the firing of missiles from the territory of the Malvinas Islands, which not only violated the aforementioned resolution but also obstructed the full implementation of the maritime safety standards of the International Maritime Organization and ran counter to the region's policy of consistently seeking a peaceful settlement of the dispute. Since those activities violated international law and the mandate of the international community, they were an affront not only to Argentina but also to the other countries in the region; as a result, the conflict was taking on a regional dimension. Even other regions had called for a resumption of negotiations and an end to the degradation of natural resources, as demonstrated by the statements of regional and biregional organizations and forums such as the Rio Group, MERCOSUR, UNASUR, the Ibero-American Summits, the Africa-South America Summits, the Arab-South America Summits and the Group of 77 and China.

39. His Government had reiterated at every opportunity its willingness to negotiate in order to comply with its obligation to settle the dispute; it was now for the United Kingdom to fulfil its obligation as a Member of the United Nations to try to reach a settlement. The question of the Malvinas Islands was not only a vital cause for the Argentine people but also a test of resolve for the Organization.

40. **Mr. Parham** (United Kingdom) said that the British Government's relationship with its Overseas Territories was a modern one based on partnership, shared values and the right of each Territory to determine whether it wished to remain linked to the United Kingdom or not. Where independence was an option and was the clear and constitutionally expressed wish of the people of a Territory, his Government would help that Territory to achieve it. Where a Territory wished to retain its link to the United Kingdom, his Government would remain committed to its future development and continued security.

41. The British Foreign Secretary had recently announced the Government's new strategy towards the Overseas Territories. The fundamental responsibility and the objective were to ensure the security and good governance of the Territories, while recognizing their diversity and tailoring policies to the specific circumstances of each one. His Government was continuing the process of modernizing the constitution of each Territory and believed that the fundamental structure of its constitutional relationships was the right one: powers were devolved to the elected governments of the settled Territories to the maximum extent possible that was consistent with the United

Kingdom's retaining the powers necessary to discharge its sovereign responsibilities.

42. The time was not right to embark on further constitutional change. Rather, his Government was focusing on three practical policy goals: to strengthen interaction between the United Kingdom and its Territories; to work with the Territories to strengthen good governance, public financial management and economic planning where necessary; and to improve the support available to the Territories. The implementation of the new strategy would take different forms in each Territory, and a public consultation exercise had been launched in order to encourage the Territories and other stakeholders to input their views on priorities. The outcome of the exercise would inform the White Paper on the Territories that the Government intended to publish in 2012. British Government ministers and Territory leaders held regular discussions on issues of mutual interest and concern.

43. His Government was committed to allowing each Territory to run its own affairs as far as possible, which entailed responsibilities and good governance on the part of the Territory. Where, however, high standards of probity and governance were not maintained, the United Kingdom did not hesitate to intervene, as it had done in 2009 when it had suspended the legislature and Government of the Turks and Caicos Islands. Since that time, much progress had been made to embed the principles of sound financial management, good governance and sustainable development across the Territorial government. It was his Government's intention to hold elections in 2012, provided that sufficient progress had been made against a set of specific milestones, one of which was the implementation of a new Turks and Caicos Islands Constitution Order. Following wide consultations, a new Constitution had been drafted and could be brought into force when conditions were right for elections to be held.

44. Lastly, following several years of negotiations between Montserrat elected representatives and representatives of the British Government, a new Constitution for Montserrat had come into force on 27 September 2011.

45. **Mr. Rosales Díaz** (Nicaragua) said that, in the drive for the total eradication of colonialism, the launch of the Third International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism was of vital importance. He expressed appreciation for the contributions and commitment of the Special Committee to that goal, and especially for having held a decolonization seminar in the Caribbean country of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. All administering Powers should be more cooperative with the Committee in initiatives such as that, and in all its work.

46. The General Assembly must give broader recognition to the colonial situation in Puerto Rico, and the administering Power must facilitate the process of self-determination. Puerto Rico had long been a brave combatant against colonialism and for independence and was now an example of the struggle against militarism and the arms build-up in the region. Eight million Puerto Ricans both at home and in the United States were living under the colonial yoke, without the ability to have their own sovereign State that would preserve their identity and culture and be an integral part of the Latin American and Caribbean region. His delegation looked forward to the day when Puerto Rico would be a full, free and independent State Member of the United Nations.

47. The sovereignty of Argentina over the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas was beyond question. The willingness of the Argentine Government to resume negotiations in order to find a solution to the dispute was recognized and supported by the entire international community. His delegation condemned the unilateral and illegal decisions of the United Kingdom to conduct missile tests and to seize Argentina's renewable and non-renewable natural resources. Such actions undermined any attempt at constructive dialogue. He called upon the United Kingdom to act in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions and to resume negotiations so as to put an end to British colonialism in that part of Latin America.

48. Nicaragua also stood in solidarity with the struggle of the Sahrawi people for self-determination and independence, and still hoped that the negotiations between the parties — the Saharan Arab Democratic Republic and Morocco — would continue without preconditions, so that the people of Western Sahara could exercise their right to self-determination.

49. **Mr. Rao** Wu (China) said that substantial progress had been achieved in the decolonization process since the adoption by the General Assembly of the historic Declaration on the Granting of

Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples and the declaration of the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism. However, despite the considerable assistance provided by the Special Committee on decolonization to the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories, including through the holding of referendums on future political arrangements, there were still 16 Non-Self-Governing Territories with 2 million inhabitants; and the decolonization process still had a long way to go.

50. Under the Charter of the United Nations and the Declaration on decolonization, it was incumbent upon Member States to assist the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories to exercise their inalienable right to self-determination. In the context of the Third International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, he hoped that the Special Committee would continue to strengthen contacts with Non-Self-Governing Territories and make further progress in the decolonization process. He urged the administering Powers and the United Nations to engage in closer cooperation in that regard. China, which had consistently supported the peoples of Non-Self-Governing Territories in their efforts to exercise their right to self-determination, would continue to participate actively in the work of the Special Committee and cooperate closely with other Member States in order to bring the process of decolonization mandated by the Charter and the Declaration to a successful conclusion.

51. **Mr. Oussein** (Comoros) said that, for more than 30 years, Western Sahara had been engaged in a conflict that pitted people of the same nation, who shared the same cultural and religious values, against each other. The status quo was not a viable or acceptable option, particularly as it had fuelled terrorist activities and related trafficking activities that threatened the unity, peace and security of the entire region. The parties must therefore show wisdom and flexibility so as to reach a negotiated solution, protect the region against terrorism and organized crime, and build a united Maghreb based on reconciliation, cooperation and friendship.

52. In that regard, Morocco's autonomy proposal, described as serious and credible by the Security Council in a number of resolutions, offered a realistic, viable and sensible option for all the parties concerned that would guarantee national integrity and stability throughout the region. He called on the parties to move forward, under United Nations auspices, on the basis of that proposal and enter into a frank and sincere dialogue so as to ensure that the efforts of the international community would not be in vain.

53. **Ms. Dunlop** (Brazil), reiterating her Government's long-standing support for the legitimate rights of Argentina in the sovereignty dispute over the Malvinas Islands, said that her delegation recognized the constructive attitude of the Argentine Government towards the resumption of negotiations with the United Kingdom and regretted the fact that no progress had been made in that regard. It also supported the mission of good offices entrusted to the Secretary-General by the General Assembly.

54. Her delegation endorsed the statements of a number of regional and interregional organizations and forums in support of the legitimate rights of Argentina over the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas. Of particular note was the Joint Declaration signed by the Presidents of Brazil and Argentina in Buenos Aires on 31 January 2011 reiterating the terms of the Joint Declaration of San Juan of 3 August 2010, which stated that the illegal hydrocarbon activities carried out by the United Kingdom on the Argentine continental shelf were unilateral acts that were incompatible with United Nations decisions with regard to the dispute. She also drew attention to the declarations of the Heads of State and Government of UNASUR of 12 October 2010 and 26 November 2010 relating, respectively, to the illegal unilateral military activities and the hydrocarbon activities carried out by the United Kingdom. Lastly, she noted the Declaration on the Question of the Malvinas Islands adopted on 7 June 2011 at the forty-first regular session of the OAS General Assembly in San Salvador and the Declaration of 25 September 2011 adopted at the Meeting of Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Group of 77 and China, which, for the first time, had called upon the United Kingdom to comply with the demands of the international community and resume negotiations on the Malvinas Islands.

55. **Mr. Alia** (Benin) said that his delegation associated itself with all the comments made by previous speakers.

56. **Ms. Allum** (United Kingdom), speaking in exercise of the right of reply to comments made by the representatives of Argentina, Chile, Uruguay,

Nicaragua and Brazil regarding the issue of sovereignty over the Falkland Islands, South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands, said that the United Kingdom had no doubts about its sovereignty over the Territory and that there could be no negotiations on sovereignty unless and until the Islanders so wished.

57. The democratically elected representatives of the Falkland Islands had once again expressed their own views clearly at the most recent session of the Special Committee on decolonization, asserting their right to self-determination as the original settlers of the Falkland Islands over 178 years earlier, a time when there had been no indigenous inhabitants and hence no displacement of population. They had also lamented the measures adopted by the Argentine Republic that unlawfully aimed to limit both their transport links and their access to open and free trade.

58. The Falkland Islands government was entitled to develop both fisheries and a hydrocarbon industry within its own waters, in accordance with article 1, paragraph 2, of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. In addition, the United Kingdom had maintained an unchanged defensive military posture in the South Atlantic for over 29 years, which included routine military exercises. It remained fully committed to defending the rights of the people of the Falkland Islands to determine their own political, social and economic future.

59. **Mr. Limeres** (Argentina), speaking in exercise of the right of reply to the comments made by the representative of the United Kingdom, said that his Government considered that the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas were an integral part of Argentine territory and that, having been illegally occupied by the United Kingdom, they were the subject of a sovereignty dispute between the two countries, as had been recognized repeatedly in successive General Assembly resolutions, all of which had urged the two Governments to resume negotiations in order to find a peaceful, lasting solution to the dispute. The Special Committee on decolonization had repeatedly issued declarations in that regard, most recently through the resolution adopted on 21 June 2011. The OAS General Assembly had also adopted a new declaration on the question of the Malvinas Islands, worded in similar terms, on 7 June 2011.

60. It was regrettable that the British Government sought to distort historical facts in an attempt to conceal the act of usurpation that it had committed in 1833, which had been the subject of continuing protests by his Government. He recalled that the two Governments had undertaken to find a peaceful solution to the problem pursuant to General Assembly resolution 2065 (XX). The British Government should honour that commitment and immediately resume negotiations. If it did so, it would be acting in the same lawful and responsible manner as it expected of the rest of the international community.

61. The principle of self-determination of peoples, the sole argument on which the United Kingdom based its alleged rights, did not apply to the sovereignty dispute between the two countries. It was, moreover, regrettable that the British Government should continue irresponsibly to raise the expectations of the inhabitants of the Malvinas Islands on the basis of the illicit appropriation of Argentine natural resources in violation of international law and contrary to the statements of international bodies. In that connection, the interests and way of life of those inhabitants were adequately protected by the relevant General Assembly resolutions and by the Constitution of the Argentine Republic. Argentina reaffirmed its legitimate rights of national sovereignty over the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas.

Requests for hearings

62. **The Chair** drew attention to 74 requests for hearings under agenda item 60, including one relating to the Declaration on decolonization (A/C.4/66/6), and others relating to Gibraltar (A/C.4/66/2), Guam (A/C.4/66/3), the Turks and Caicos Islands (A/C.4/66/4), the United States Virgin Islands (A/C.4/66/5) and Western Sahara (A/C.4/66/7). She took it that the Committee wished to grant those requests.

63. *It was so decided.*

The meeting rose at 5.15 p.m.